

Message Text

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53

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 SAJ-01

SAM-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /087 W
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R 050829Z JUN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1029

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 6369

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: PEOPLE'S DAILY ON CHOU'S HEALTH

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME, CHINESE HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY TOLD THAT PREMIER CHOU HAS HEALTH PROBLEMS. THE NOTIFICATION CAME WHEN PEOPLE'S DAILY JUNE 1 RAN THE TEXT OF MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER RAZAK'S MAY 31 FAREWELL BANQUET SPEECH.

2. IN HIS REMARKS (NCNA ENGLISH, MAY 31), RAZAK SAID "I AM SORRY THAT PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI IS UNABLE TO BE WITH US TONIGHT. AS YOU ALL KNOW, HE IS UNDER HIS DOCTORS' ORDERS TO CURTAIL HIS ACTIVITIES." PEOPLE'S DAILY TOOK THE PERHAPS UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF REWORKING A VISITING FOREIGN DIGNITARY'S REMARKS WHEN IT EXCISED THE SECOND QUOTED SENTENCE ABOVE FROM THE PUBLISHED TEXT OF RAZAK'S SPEECH AND SUBSTITUTED THE WORDS "BECAUSE OF A PHYSICAL INDISPOSITION." RAZAK'S COMMENT ON CHOU'S HEALTH THUS WAS REPORTED AS "I AM SORRY PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI IS UNABLE TO BE WITH US TONIGHT BECAUSE OF A PHYSICAL INDISPOSITION."

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3. COMMENT. THE PEOPLE'S DAILY AMENDED VERSION OF RAZAK'S REMARKS CONSTITUTED THE FIRST DOMESTIC MEDIA REFERENCE TO

CHOU'S NOT BEING WELL. BUT BY OMITTING RAZAK'S REFERENCE TO
CHOU'S HAVING CURTAILED HIS ACTIVITIES UNDER "DOCTORS' ORDERS,"
THERE IS NO IMPRESSION GIVEN CHINA'S POPULACE THAT CHOU'S HEALTH
PROBLEM IS SERIOUS. IN ANY EVENT, THE REGIME'S DECISION TO REWRITE
RAZAK'S SPEECH SEEMS A STRIKING DEMONSTRATION OF CHINESE
SENSITIVITY ABOUT THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF ITS AGED LEADERSHIP.
CROSS

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